



Assumption Cathedral, Zagorsk

Just before the brief August removal of President Mikhail Gorbachev, representatives from the Institute on Religion and Democracy (Kent Hill), the Campbell University School of Law (Lynn Buzzard), the Christian Legal Society (Bruce Pelkey), and Catholic University (Robert Destro) went to Moscow in mid-July for a conference on law and democracy jointly sponsored with the Moscow-based International Center for All-Human Values. Afterwards, Hill, Buzzard, and Pelkey traveled to Vladimir, Saratov, and Rostov-on-Don in Russia, and Tbilisi in Georgia, as guests of the Russian and Georgia Bar Associations to lecture and discuss issues related to democracy, morality and religion.

Imagining a Future after Communism

*IRD Director Reports on Summer,
Pre-Coup Lectures in the USSR*

By Kent R. Hill

To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty, or happiness without any virtue in the people is a chimerical idea.

-- James Madison, 1788

The airport kiosk in Tbilisi, Georgia, was a study in contrasts. Plastered to the glass were pin-up girls and crucifixes -- both for sale. Neither were publicly sold a decade ago and now both are available from the same vendor. The juxtaposition of soft porn and religious symbols jarred the sensibilities, but is a graphic reminder that *glasnost* has brought both the bad and the good that freedom invariably allows.

Since it was tough to find a Communist Party member in the Soviet Union during my trip, it would have been difficult for the August coup leaders to reassert the old ideology. Many have left the party, while many who remain have acknowledged the considerable damage that the party has inflicted on the Soviet people and its society. (There are exceptions, such as the lawyer in Rostov-on-Don who insisted that the Soviet absorption of the Baltic countries was just like California joining the United States.) In Vladimir, of 135 lawyers in the Collegium of Advocates, only three are now communists. A woman lawyer told me how she and her daughter had argued three years

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More than sex was on the agenda for the Presbyterian and Episcopal conventions this summer -- see page 4

IRD Executive Director Kent Hill prepares to spend eight months teaching in the Soviet Union -- see page 8

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ago about whether the girl ought to join the Young Communist League (Komsomol) as a means to insure her future education. The girl refused, and now her mother concedes that her daughter did the right thing.

Among those with whom we spoke in July, there was an almost universal sense that the communist experiment has failed both economically and morally. Though most seem to favor moving towards a market economy, and though the signs of entrepreneurship are in evidence, it was clear that there will be no smooth transition from a command to a free economy. The failed mid-August coup reminds us of this.

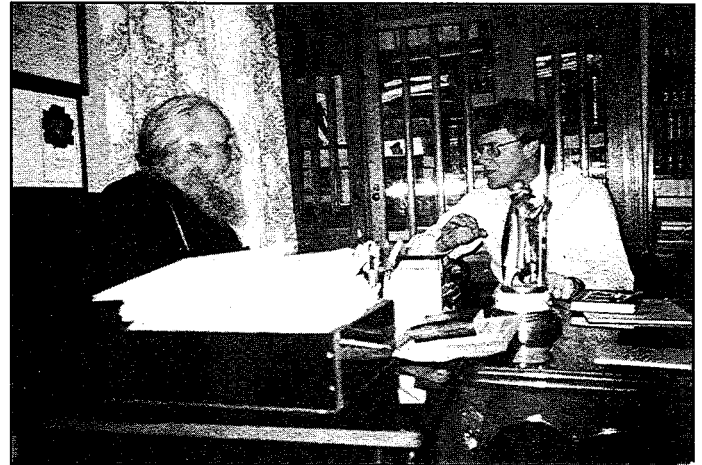
Free markets, no less than democratic political arrangements, do not exist in a moral vacuum. Many who held power under the old system began simply to try to take advantage of the moves toward privatization to enrich themselves by utilizing their still privileged positions during the transition period. Often missing is an understanding of the difference between profiteering and earning a fair return on one's investment and initiative. There is a moral context for Western successes which many fear does not yet exist in the Soviet world. The virtues of initiative, cooperation, compromise, and willingness to take a risk and work hard are not ones which were cultivated under communism, nor is there a sense even now that these virtues are prized or rewarded. These values cannot come into existence overnight. What is so overlooked in our analysis of communist societies is that the legacy of communism and totalitarianism affects virtually every citizen. Lying has become a way of life for millions. Stealing from the state came to be accepted as a necessity. As one disgruntled Soviet told me: "The State pretends to pay me and I pretend to work."

Many years ago Alexander Solzhenitsyn addressed the problem in an essay in which he insisted that the way to undermine the totalitarian system was for individuals to refuse to lie. In Vaclav Havel's inaugural speech as president of Czechoslovakia he insisted that his fellow citizens not simply place all the blame for what had happened on the leadership, but rather it was necessary, he contended, for every person to accept his role in acquiescing in the face of evil. Even Gorbachev in his book on *Perestroika* insisted that the crisis facing Soviet society was spiritual (moral), as well as economic.

A graphic example of the impact of the totalitarian

abuse of power is the interpersonal relations which exist at the lowest levels of society. Over and over again, I observed supervisors in stores and hotels dictatorially rule over their employees. They simply treat others the way their immediate supervisors treat them. Store clerks are systematically and unnecessarily rude to their customers. The abuse of power at the top is replicated throughout society. These patterns will not easily be broken.

Astute observers have long argued that the achievement of democracy and justice require far



Archbishop Pimen of Saratov and Volgograd, with Kent Hill

more than the demise of communism. Freedom is a God-ordained value, but it exists in a universe ordered by both physical and spiritual laws. To ignore these laws, to demand freedom without accepting responsibility, is a prescription for moral chaos.

For a society long mired in a totalitarian abuse of power -- where laws have been routinely manipulated to suit the whims of the leaders and where the legal profession was frequently subservient to tyrannical leaders -- the quest for a just and democratic society is critically important, yet frustratingly difficult. For over three weeks I listened to elected deputies to the Russian Supreme Soviet, lawyers, judges, and law professors describe their problems and ask numerous questions about the Western political and legal system. The whole legal system of the USSR and its republics is in flux, and amidst the excitement over reshaping legal codes, there was a constant concern over how to insure the existence of an institutional framework sufficient to enforce new laws.

The common theme of our delegation's speeches and discussion was that law, democracy, and a stable society require a moral base -- a base which is, we argued, best secured by Christian understandings of

reality. I proposed that democracy ought not to be understood merely as either majority rule or doing what was "best" for the majority. Rather, I contended that genuine democracy requires four conditions: 1) a recognition of the notion of "inalienable" human rights (of which "religious freedom" or "freedom of conscience" is the cornerstone), 2) a separation of powers (based on the Christian understanding of fallible human nature), 3) the right of the majority to control through elections its own fate, and 4) the rights of minorities to be protected against arbitrary and unjust actions of the majority. I further noted that the societal climate which seems best to foster democracies includes free markets and a vibrant network of independent organizations (churches, as well as a wide variety of charitable, cultural, educational, and other private groups).

Our hosts' response to these views on democracy and the role of religion in society was very positive. In fact, a Russian edition of our speeches and some of the responses is now in preparation. In Saratov, formerly a city closed to foreigners, the editorial board and correspondents from the local communist papers hosted a press conference for Buzzard, Pelkey, and myself. It was a frank and cordial exchange of views. Afterwards, the editor conceded that these were very difficult days since they were not sure from day to day what the official communist position even was.

In response to a question as to how religion had managed to survive the atheist assault, Archbishop Pimen of Saratov and Volgograd smiled wisely and said: "We survived because of the 'Institute of Grandmothers.'" Indeed, where churches were closed down or compromised, it was often left to the ever-present Russian *babushka* to pass on the faith.

Recent public opinion surveys conducted in Russia by the All-Union Center of Social Opinion and the International Center for All-Human Values confirm that a majority of Soviet citizens look to religion primarily as a source of moral values. Though this is encouraging on one level, it is disturbing on another. It is, of course, highly significant that decades of atheist, anti-religious indoctrination have failed to destroy a public sense that religion is important to society. But the idea that religion has only a utilitarian function in society is inadequate. It can be argued that values which are supported primarily for pragmatic reasons will never endure the tough times as well as those values which are rooted in conscious

convictions regarding who God is and what His requirements for justice are.

The spiritual laws which are at work in the USSR are the same ones which exist in the West. Our own democratic experiment and the very fabric of our societies are threatened by forces hostile to religious values. This is the challenge we share with the citizens of the USSR. Our futures will be shaped by how we face the great moral and spiritual questions which are inescapable for both individuals and

Astute observers have long argued that the achievement of democracy and justice require far more than the demise of communism.

societies. Though there is great uncertainty about the future among the peoples of the USSR, there is at least a real openness to grapple with issues once considered only to be the last refuge of the "religious."

Though the recent survey data reveals that the Church enjoys more public respect than any other social or political entity, it also documents that those who identify themselves as Orthodox rarely attend church or read religious materials. In other words, to be a "believer" may for many simply mean a rejection of atheism. This is an important first step to faith, but a mature, informed, living faith requires active piety and religious education -- something which has not been an option for the vast majority of Soviet citizens for over 70 years.

In the dizzying, often confusing, times for the Soviet people, with leaders coming and going and reforms at times in doubt, their long-run future will be significantly determined by the answers they finally reach regarding the great moral and spiritual issues. The way their societies are economically and politically ordered will, in part, be a product of their religious and moral understandings. It is a time of great opportunity to discuss issues of ultimate meaning. It is why I plan to return with my family to Moscow later this year for an extended stay.

The hottest issues at two of this year's big church conventions were about sexuality. Much more, however, was involved. The following summaries report on key issues regarding the public, international witness in the oldline world.

Presbyterian Assembly Shows Culture Split

Perhaps the most striking statement to issue from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) came in the assembly's pastoral letter on human sexuality. But it was not what the letter said about sexuality: its reaffirmation of heterosexual marriage and of the bar to ordaining self-declared practicing homosexuals. These conclusions were not conclusions at all. They will not settle the long, unfinished Presbyterian debate on sexuality. The PCUSA commissioners who met in Baltimore did no more than hold to the fuzzy lines of the current church position.

What was striking in the pastoral letter was its frank confession of a more fundamental problem:

We [the commissioners] also believe that at the heart of the recent debate lies a painful distrust of the General Assembly by many of our members. Often the General Assembly has been perceived as telling individual members what to think. Let it be said that in Baltimore the 203rd General Assembly (1991) heard the cry of the church for an assembly that listens to the grassroots.

Never before has the PCUSA's highest body so explicitly recognized the gap which must be bridged between the denomination's structure at the national level and its members in local congregations. This dangerous gap between the two church cultures -- the Presbyterianism of the bureaucracy and the Presbyterianism of the grassroots -- goes far beyond matters of sexuality.

The most obvious way in which the assembly heeded grassroots Presbyterians was in its rejection of a sexuality report that would have overturned traditional Christian teaching. An avalanche of 86 overtures from presbyteries and tens of thousands of letters from individual members left no doubt about the mind of the church. "This church is not ready, does not want to reverse the position" it has taken on sexuality, declared Gordon Stewart, who moderated the assembly's Committee on Human Sexuality.

The new vow to "listen to the grassroots" applied to more than just sexuality. The assembly's pastoral letter, and its debates more broadly, indicated an

awareness of a defective process in the PCUSA. A pattern of unrepresentative "special committees" producing unbalanced, extreme "study papers" had not only marred the sexuality report, but also compromised the church's approach to other controversial issues. These sorts of abuses have been targeted for several years by Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom (PDRF) a reform group now affiliated with the IRD.



The commissioners in Baltimore took some specific steps toward a more open process of social policy witness. They amended the Standing Rules of the General Assembly, first to require that

"people of diverse viewpoints must be part of" any body developing a policy statement for the General Assembly. A second amendment directed that study papers on social issues must "provide resource materials, bibliography, and aids that set forth the issues with fair representation of the diverse viewpoints within the church."

It remains to be seen whether these directives from the church's highest body will actually change the habits of the agencies that are supposed to serve that body. Those agencies may take some comfort in having dodged two other measures which might have clipped their wings. An amendment to the PCUSA Book of Order setting up a referendum process by which General Assembly social policy statements could be challenged was referred to an ongoing committee. A PDRF priority resolution requiring church officials, when speaking publicly, to make clearer distinctions between their personal opinions and the General Assembly's positions was defeated.

One area in which the 1991 assembly probably reflected the membership's views more closely was in its response to the Persian Gulf War. The commissioners ended up taking no position, pro or con, on the morality of the multinational military response to Iraqi aggression. A proposed resolution from the official Committee on Social Witness Policy would have implied an endorsement of the anti-war stance of Stated Clerk James Andrews and other leaders of "the

ecumenical community." But the resolution was amended to note that "many faithful Christians believe that justifiable grounds existed for an appropriate measured military response in the Gulf." The amended resolution also gave "honor [to] the difficult choices and sacrifices made by the men and women who participated in expelling the army of Iraq from Kuwait." An attempt to commend President Bush's decisions was, however, voted down. The commissioners preferred to avoid any appearance of partisanship by the church.

Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom played an important role in one other departure from the pattern of previous assemblies. This was a resolution taking a strong stand for religious freedom in Cuba. The 1991 assembly pledged to "affirm and support the work of the church in Cuba ... to achieve religious liberty, media access, halting discrimination in education and employment for professed Christians, and creating a society where there is respect for individual religious choice."

This statement is entirely consistent with the PCUSA's stated commitment to human rights, including freedom of conscience. Until now, though, the General Assembly and related bodies have shown a certain partiality in defending human rights. They have been quite outspoken, with appropriate righteous anger, about violations in certain countries: those with right-wing governments. By contrast, there has been a slowness, a timidity, sometimes a total silence about comparable or worse abuses in other countries: those with Marxist-Leninist governments.

Numerous PCUSA-related delegations have gone to Cuba, often praising the supposed social benefits of the communist system there, but rarely protesting the human rights violations under that system. In 1990 the assembly passed a major policy statement on U.S.-Cuba relations. The statement concentrated on criticizing U.S. policy. It contained only one brief petition for "the Cuban government to re-examine its practices regarding political prisoners." At that time, PDRF-supported efforts to broaden the advocacy of human rights were rejected.

In preparation for Baltimore, PDRF worked on a new resolution with the Rev. Martin Anorga, a prominent Cuban-American pastor and a commissioner to the 1991 assembly. The resolution submitted by Anorga noted "the testimony of individual Cubans and respected international human rights organizations

[that] systematic violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights continue in Cuba." It requested that all Presbyterian delegations visiting Cuba make known to the Cuban government their concern for religious liberty.

As often happens, church agency officials were allowed the last word on the resolution. A few years ago they might have mounted a fierce campaign against any criticism of Fidel Castro's regime. But the world has changed, and now the officials said they were "basically in favor" of Anorga's resolution. They were concerned, though, that the language might be "provocative." As a result, the resolution was watered down. It remains, nevertheless, the strongest statement that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has made thus far on Cuba.



The Rev. James B. Simons (center, right) and the Very Rev. John H. Rodgers (center, left), from the Diocese of Pittsburgh, listen intently to action on the floor of the House of Deputies at the 1991 Episcopal General Convention. Simons is a board member of the Episcopal Committee on Religion and Freedom, and Rodgers is a board member for IRD.

Episcopalians Tackle Gulf War, Democracy, Religious Freedom Issues

The 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Phoenix, was about a lot more than sex. It was about some 500 resolutions on many issues, but with an important, ongoing lesson: that the church lacks a central framework, a clear biblical and theological understanding of the meaning of public life and the call of the church as a public institution.

Dr. Allan Parrent of Virginia Theological Seminary wrote in the Spring issue of *Anglican Opinion* (the quarterly of the IRD-affiliated Episcopal Committee on Religion and Freedom, ECRF) that the Episcopal
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Church "appears at times somewhat muddled, inconsistent, self-contradictory and unfocused in its moral appeal." Parrent suggested that it was time to remedy this problem while maintaining a commitment to peace and justice. Though there was much greater openness to the contributions of ECRF in Phoenix than in Detroit (1988) or Anaheim (1985), movement toward clarity of purpose by the church in public life appeared not to rise from the ashes in Arizona.

Debates over the justification and conduct of the Gulf War, not to mention the current use of sanctions, demonstrated the absence of consensus over the moral responsibility of the church. Neither the bishops nor the deputies discussed sufficiently the relevance of the just war tradition to the Gulf War, or the validity of the effort to pursue the war by the international coalition. References to any moral tradition were purged from the resolution in committee, and a hot debate emerged in the House of Bishops over a provision to commend President George Bush for his prayerful leadership. The bishops clearly were divided on the matter -- the only significant vote, on a key amendment, failed by one vote, 79-78. The resolution ultimately failed to pass both houses, but it brought about an important debate in the life of the church.

In terms of other resolutions ECRF supported or introduced, there was great success in advancing the Episcopal Church's commitment to religious liberty. ECRF-sponsored resolutions on Vietnam, China and the Middle East passed both houses easily. These resolutions have "teeth" in them. For example, the resolution on China directs Episcopalians participating in ecumenical delegations there to present lists of prisoners of conscience to government officials. The resolution on Vietnam requires the church to make a formal presentation to the representatives of that country on the conditions of specific prisoners.

Without the work of ECRF and Bishop Peter Lee of Virginia, the convention would have ignored the important transitions happening in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A Lee-sponsored resolution, passed



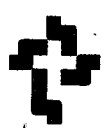
by both houses, urges dioceses and parishes to pursue multiple avenues of direct support to emerging churches in those regions. ECRF will be working hard to explore with the church how this may be done.

ECRF's efforts to bring about recognition of the democratic and market-oriented revolutions around the world were mixed in their results. Our resolution commending the 1990 elections in Nicaragua was the subject of vigorous debate in the House of Bishops, and was subjected to all manner of accusations of demonic, Pentagon-conducted "low-intensity conflict" and "duplicitous motives" on the part of the authors of the resolution. It was significantly amended to remove all references to democracy; it was defeated after a deputy, ECRF board member James Simons indicated to the House of Deputies that "the only resemblance to the original resolution was the word 'Nicaragua.'" Though ECRF was unable to make progress on bringing concerns about democracy into the discussion of the future of Palestinians in Israeli-held territories, a resolution affirming recent progress in El Salvador did pass on the last day without debate.

Encouraging the passage of resolutions was not the only activity of ECRF at the convention. Simons and ECRF Director Lawrence Adams testified before and provided literature to a special committee weighing how the church should respond to environmental concerns. The result was some quite thoughtful work by the committee, something that the church can build on in the future as it considers important questions on earthly stewardship.

ECRF also testified against several resolutions that posited grand conspiracy theories -- all indebted to the Christic Institute's work -- about alleged plans by the U.S. government to destabilize the Third World. Through its daily news briefing and testimony, ECRF also questioned the church's fixation with sanctions toward South Africa, and instead suggested that it consider ways of relieving suffering and promoting reconciliation in that deeply torn country.

As ECRF looks ahead, its concerns are two-fold. According to Adams the first task "is to monitor and participate in follow-through on the commitments to religious liberty and democratic development." Secondly ECRF intends to "push the broader and more significant question: Can the Episcopal Church develop a clear framework from which it knows how and when to speak and act on public issues?"



Evangelicals Face Orthodox Pressure in Soviet Georgia

By Kent R. Hill

It was Sunday morning, July 28, 1991. Orthodox priest Father Georgi gathered 30 of his congregation in the city of Guaarumi (about 65 miles east of Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia) and marched to the local Baptist Church. As the Baptist fellowship of 300 began to gather, they found the entrance to their church blocked. The scene was made still uglier when the Orthodox threatened arson and killing if the Baptists returned to their church the next week. There is no report of the threats being carried out.

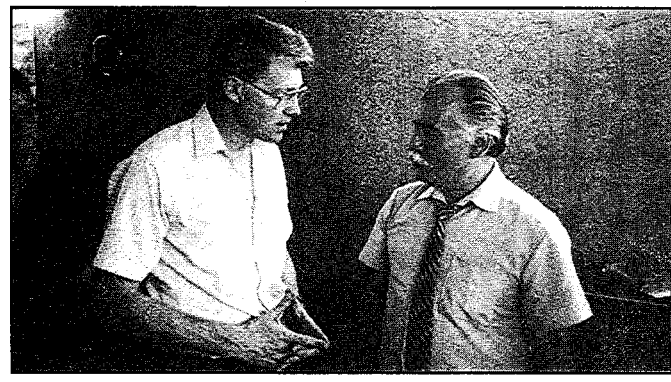
Sadly, the incident in Guaarumi is not isolated. Similar episodes have occurred in Gurgaan (July 1991), Gori (1991), Bolnisi (May 1991), and Akhaltsiche (1990). These events were reported to our delegation (see page 1) on August 4 by Rev. Guram Kamelashvili, pastor of a large Baptist Church in Tbilisi. He is also the President of the Baptist Union of Georgia, which has 22 churches and 5,000 members.

What accounts for the hostility of extremist elements in the Orthodox Church to the Baptists, Pentecostals (2,000 in Georgia), and other evangelicals? There are, of course, theological differences, but most Orthodox would not defend threats of violence against those with whom they differ. The intensification of Orthodox hostilities towards evangelicals seems directly related to the rise of Georgian nationalism coincident with the demise of communist influence there. The Georgian Orthodox Church is a rallying cry for the Georgian independence movement, and the evangelicals are dismissed as "sectarians." Ironically, the first Russian Baptist Church in the Russian empire was founded in Tbilisi in 1867, and there have been Georgian Baptists since early in the century.

The public attacks on evangelicals have multiplied in recent years. One of the most disturbing and frightening examples occurs on national television. Father Archil, a prominent member of the Georgian parliament, uses his weekly televised sermon to condemn the "sectarians" and to blame them for everything from the moral corruption in the country to

earthquakes. Some Orthodox extremists have gone so far as to attack the evangelicals as the "Anti-Christ." As Kumelashvili put it, "even the communists never attacked us in this way."

There is other evidence of discrimination against the evangelicals. For 15 years the Baptists in Tbilisi



Kent Hill, with Pastor Guram Kamelashvili, President of the Baptist Union of Georgia

have been denied permission to build a new church or expand. The Sunday we were there the 600 seats were all full, with the aisles packed and dozens looking through the windows. There are also Russian, Armenian, and Ossetian Baptist congregations which meet in the church. *Glasnost* has not resulted in permission to get a building permit. It has simply restored an old historical pattern: the majority religion uses its power to discriminate against minorities.

In recent years, more religious materials have been allowed into the country than in the past. We saw boxes of Bibles from both the United States and Germany. Unfortunately, the Baptists are repeatedly denied permission to publish their materials legally.

On four separate occasions the head of the Georgian Baptists has met personally with Ilia II, patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church. But though the Protestant leadership has been politely received, the Orthodox hierarchy has thus far proven to be either unable or unwilling to rein in the aggressive actions and rhetoric of some of its priests. Even the patriarch has warned the population against the "sectarians" and expressed concern about Baptist work with children.

Karl-Heinz Walter of the European Baptist Federation has protested the treatment of the Baptists to government officials. You too may express your concern. Unstable conditions in the USSR increase the likelihood of more abuse. Request that the tactics of intimidation cease and that the Tbilisi Baptist Church be given a building permit. Write: President Eviad Gamsakhurdiya, Republic of Georgia, Rustaveli Boulevard, Tbilisi, Georgia, USSR.

Taking Action:

1991 Religious Freedom Award to Michael Bourdeaux

The Rev. Canon Michael Bourdeaux, an Anglican priest, has been named to receive the IRD's 1991 Religious Freedom Award. Bourdeaux is the founder of Keston College, Oxford, long the West's most reliable source of information on religious persecution under communism. Without regard to denomination or nationality, Keston maintained contact with believers, documented cases of prisoners, and reported on government activities that victimized believers. For this, Keston received criticism in the East, and was a target of Soviet disinformation. Bourdeaux for years was not allowed to visit the USSR.

Bourdeaux is the author of ten books, the most recent being *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel* (1990). He will receive the award at a luncheon on October 8. The luncheon is a part of a conference celebrating IRD's 10th anniversary.



Religion & Democracy

monthly publication of the
Institute on Religion and Democracy
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Washington, D.C. 20005-4706
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IRD Director to Moscow for Eight Months

In one of IRD's most exciting and innovative projects ever, Kent Hill will, if circumstances allow, move with his family to the USSR for eight months beginning in late November. Through a variety of tasks he will promote Christian values, human rights, religious freedom, and an understanding of the link between democracy and the Christian faith.

Hill's background has prepared him for this assignment. He has a Ph.D. in Russian history, experience in teaching both church and Russian history, and is a recognized authority on religion in the USSR. His book *The Puzzle of the Soviet Church* (1989, Multnomah Press) was significantly updated this summer by *The Soviet Union on the Brink* and *Turbulent Times for the Soviet Church* (a condensed, popular paperback edition). He is fluent in Russian.

The International Center for All-Human Values, in cooperation with Moscow State University, the USSR Academy of Sciences, and Moscow public schools, has issued the formal invitation for Hill's stay.

Hill will teach a 20-week course at Moscow State University on Christian apologetics, as well as conduct a series of roundtable discussions on church/state issues related to his recently published book on religion in the USSR. In addition, he will work with Michael Matskovsky, director of the Center for All-Human Values, on research topics related to religion and morality in Soviet society. The center's research has concluded that the most stable societies are those with religiously based sense of absolute ethical standards.

Janice Hill, Kent's wife, will teach English in a Russian secondary school, while Kent will develop curriculum materials and teach in the same school on democracy, human rights, and the history of the church. Jennifer (11) and Jonathan (9) will attend a Russian school. Hill also has other invitations to lecture on democratic theory, Christian apologetics, and church history in universities and law schools outside of Moscow.

On his way home to the United States next August, Hill will lecture on his experiences in Moscow at Oxford University.

For the period of Dr. Hill's special assignment in the USSR, the IRD Board of Directors has named Deputy Director Diane Knippers to be Acting Director at the IRD.